

Lowell Public Schools

Language Access Presentation
School Year 2021 - 2022





Agenda

1. Defining Language Access
2. Student & Family Demographics
3. Improving Access to Communication
4. Current Budgeted Services
5. Reflections on Services & Data Collection
6. Next Steps



What is Language Access?





Vision for Language Access

All families are able to interact with their teachers, principals and central administrators to solve student-level matters, participate in compulsory and non-compulsory school activities, present ideas for school improvement and be active contributing members of our school community without language presenting a barrier to communication and participation.





Defining Language Access

Language access is series of language-based services which enable individuals who have limited English proficiency to be able to receive the same level of communication and access to opportunities as native-English speakers.

This includes services such as translation, interpretation, staff professional development, and the implementation of communications tools.

The goal of language access planning is to ensure that our English learner students and families have their communications needs met when it comes to the educational services.





Language Access Theory of Action

If we

- Increase two way communication between families and schools
- Work to understand the cultural backgrounds of our families through language
- Develop the operational capacity of language services in school buildings and across the district

Then we

- Increase the capacity of multilingual families to advocate for and engage in their student's education
- Deepen the relationship between what families value in education and what schools can teach students
- Ensure that the volume of language services needed is met in each school building.





U.S. DOE Office of Civil Rights Guidance on Language Access



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights



Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them

This fact sheet answers common questions about the rights of parents and guardians who do not speak, listen, read, or write English proficiently because it is not their primary language.

Must my child's school provide information to me in a language I can understand?

Yes. Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English. This includes, but is not limited to, information related to:

- registration and enrollment in school and school programs
- language assistance programs
- report cards
- student discipline policies and procedures
- special education and related services, and meetings to discuss special education
- parent-teacher conferences
- grievance procedures and notices of nondiscrimination
- parent handbooks
- gifted and talented programs
- magnet and charter schools
- requests for parent permission for student participation in school activities

Source:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>





U.S. DOE Office of Civil Rights Guidance on Language Access

Must a school provide language assistance if I request it even if my child is proficient in English and I am somewhat proficient in English?

Yes. Schools must respond to a parent's request for language assistance and remember that parents can be limited English proficient even if their child is proficient in English.

May my child's school ask my child, other students, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for me?

No. Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents.

What information should I expect from the school if my child is an English learner?

When your child enrolls, you should receive a home language survey or similar form to fill out that helps the school identify potential English learners, who are eligible for language assistance services. If your child is identified as an English learner, the school must notify you in writing within 30 days of the school year starting with information about your child's English language proficiency level, programs and services available to meet your child's educational needs, and your right to opt your child out of a program or particular services for English learners. For more information about the rights of English learners, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-el-students-201501.pdf>.

[OCR-00087]

Source:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>



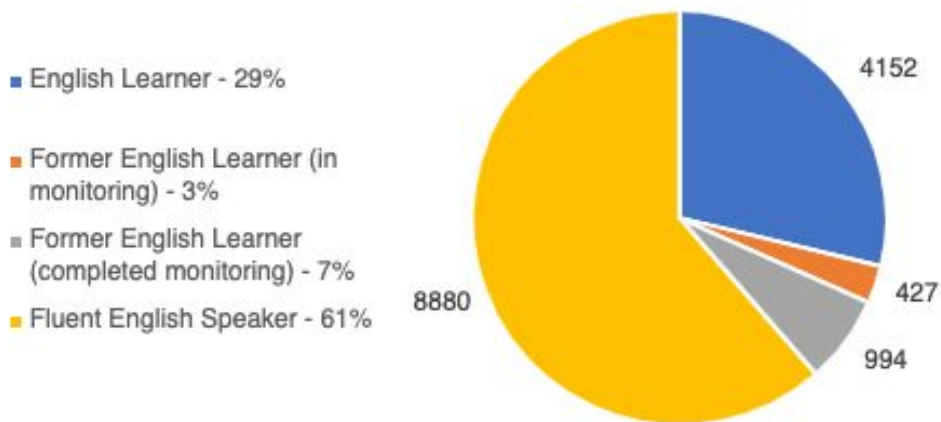
Student & Family Demographics





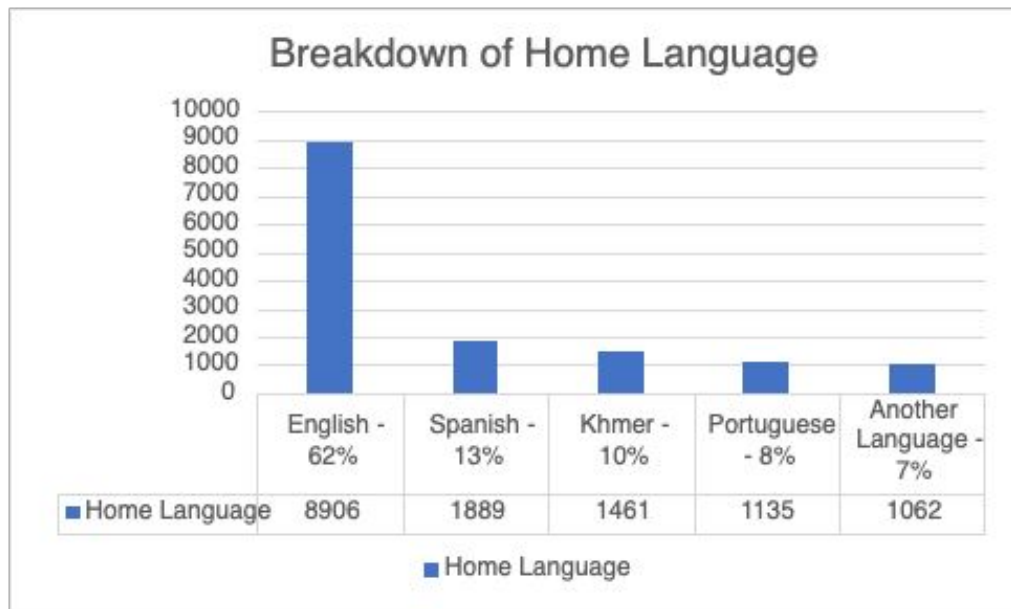
English Learner & Non-English Learner Students

Percentage of EL Students (SY 2021-2022)





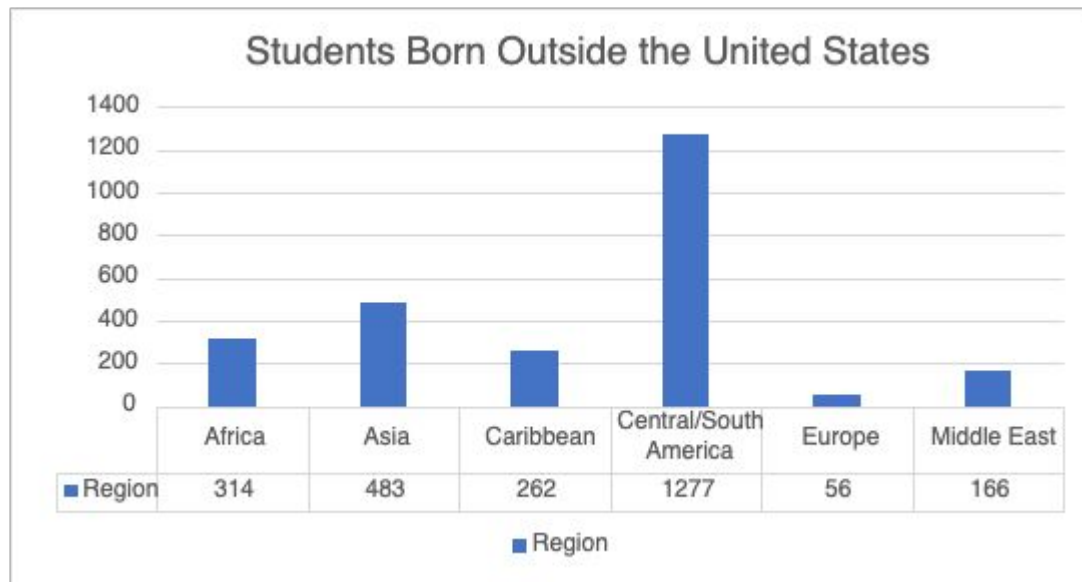
Demographics - Home Language



* A high incidence language is defined as a language that is spoken by 5% or more of the total population. In Lowell Public Schools, our high incidence languages are Spanish, Khmer, and Portuguese.



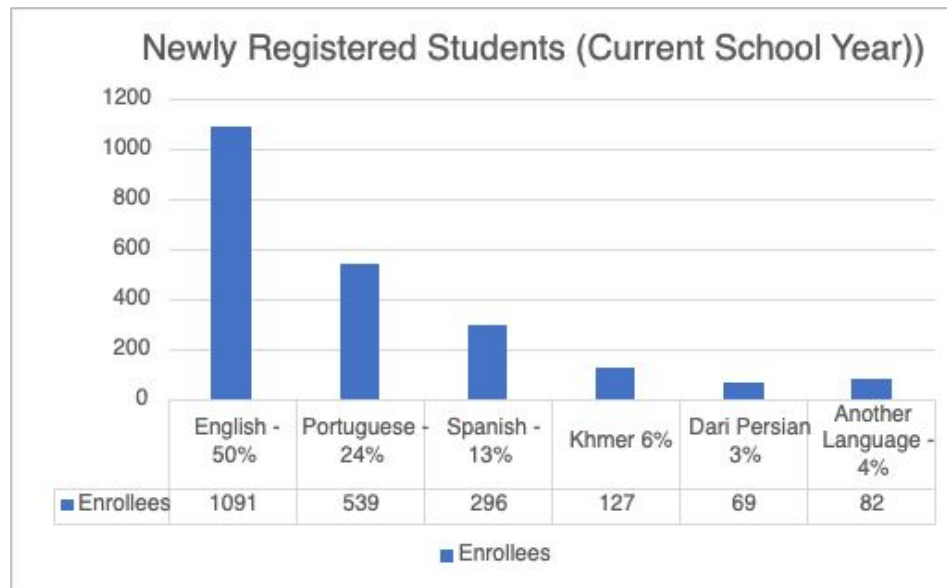
Demographics - Students Born Outside the U.S.





Newly Registered Students (SY 2021-2022)

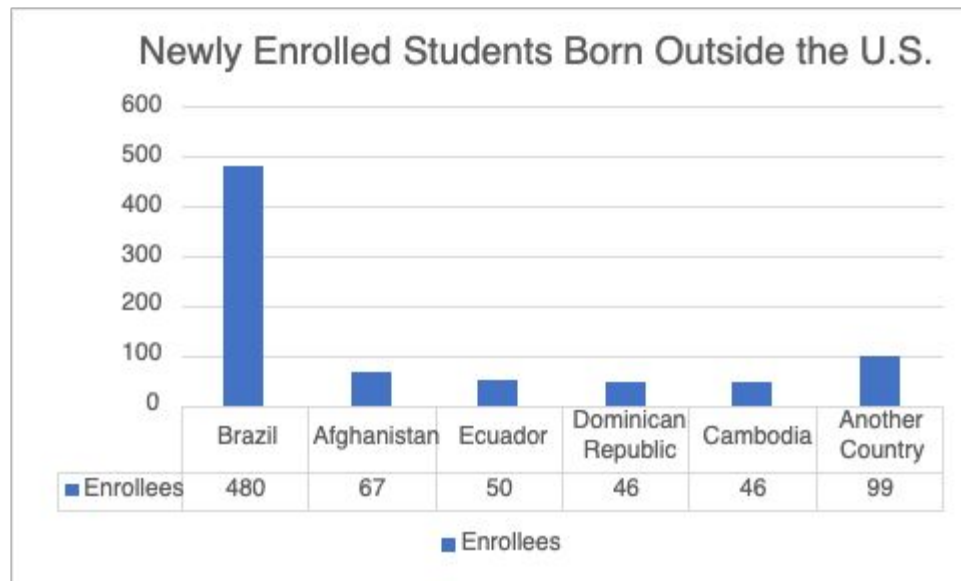
- By Language



- To date, for the 2021-22 school year, 50% of newly enrolled students indicated a home language other than English.



Newly Registered Students (SY 2021-2022) Born Outside the U.S.



- To date, 36% of newly enrolled students were born outside of the United States.

Improving Access to Communication





Communication Goals

- The communications team housed within the Office of Equity and Empowerment is comprised of the Community Outreach Strategist, Bilingual Family Liaison Lead and the District Webmaster.
- The team is in the final stage of completing a communications plan with goals to:
 - Provide accurate and timely information to all stakeholders (students, families, staff and community members) on issues of importance pertaining to the school district in ways that are easy to access regardless of primary language, disability, or income status.
 - Differentiate communications methods and outreach strategies based on the needs, interests and communication styles of different stakeholders.
 - Elevate 360 degree communication with stakeholders.
 - Showcase and promote the people, programs, and initiatives of the Lowell Public Schools to help the public at-large, as well as those working and studying in our buildings, get a more comprehensive picture of everything the school district offers and the values it encompasses.



Communication Goals - Family Stakeholders

For family stakeholders, the ultimate goal of our communications team is to develop a 360 strategy for communication which at the district-level will help our team improve our central office family communication and engagement initiatives and at the school-level help increase family agency to solve student specific issues that may arise and build trusting relationships.



Communications Matrix

Type of Communication	Website	Email	Phone Call	Text Message	Social Media	Newsletter
General Outreach	✓	✓			✓	✓
School Closure (Weather)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
School Delay (Weather)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
School Early Dismissal (Weather)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
School News Promotion					✓	✓
School Activities					✓	✓
Survey Promotion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-School/District Outreach		✓	✓			
Information Sessions/Forums	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Current Direct Services, Resources and Programs and Select Needs

School-based Service Needs

- New Student/Family Onboarding
- Conferences between parents/guardians and staff
- Communication regarding programs, events, and opportunities
- Student achievement and progress celebration
- Welcoming environment improvement
- Opportunities for parents to participate in school activities and decision-making meetings
- Emergency communications
- Disciplinary issue resolution

Available Resources

- Telephonic Interpretation
- Document Translation
- Consecutive Interpretation (remote & in-person)
- Simultaneous Interpretation (remote & in-person)
- Bilingual Family Liaison Support
- Translation and Interpretation Workshops & Trainings for Improving Skills of Bilingual Staff
- Multilingual Parent Academy Programs and School-based Welcome Circles



Multilingual Communications Matrix (School-Based)

School-Based Communication						
Type of Communication	Class Dojo / Remind	Phone Interpretation	In-Person Interpretation	Email Translation	Document Translation	Machine Translation
School activities	✓			✓	✓	
School survey	✓			✓	✓	
Student progress update	✓	✓				
Parent-Teacher Conference	✓	✓	✓			
Progress Report				✓	✓	
Report Card				✓	✓	
Disciplinary Hearing			✓	✓	✓	
Emergency Communication		✓		✓	✓	✓
School Newsletter						✓



Language Needs - District Communications

Examples of District-Wide Communications

- Communication through registration process
- District-wide program and information sharing
- District-wide surveys and feedback gathering
- Public presentations and forums
- Weather-related communications
- Social media (bilingual Facebook pages)
- Crisis communication



Multilingual Communications Matrix (District-Based)

District-Wide Communication					
Type of Communication	ConnectED Call (top 3 languages)	ConnectED Call (top 7 languages)	Email Translation (top 3 languages)	Email Translation (top 7 languages)	Machine Translation
Inclement Weather		✓		✓	
LPS Promotion	✓		✓		
Community Program			✓		
Survey Promotion	✓		✓		
Crisis Communication		✓		✓	
Monthly Newsletter					✓

Current Budgeted Services

School Year 2021 - 2022





Language Service Costs - Vendors & Staff

- 4 contracted vendors for translation & interpretation services:
 - Language Bank
 - Language Bridge
 - American Translation Partners
 - Lionbridge

- Bilingual Family Liaisons
 - 5 centralized liaisons
(Spanish, Portuguese, Khmer, Swahili, and French)

- 3 school-based full-time Bilingual family Liaisons
 - Greenhalge Elementary School (Spanish)
 - Bartlett Community Partnership (Spanish)
 - Stoklosa Middle School (Spanish)



School Year 2021 - 2022

Language Service Use and Associated Costs

Telephone Interpretation	Month	Number of Calls	Spend
Company: Lionbridge	November	381	\$1,612.63
	December	291	\$1,093.05
	January	580	\$2,105.25
	February	Approx. 396	\$1,679.10
	March	TBD	TBD
	Total (November to Present)	1648	\$6,490.03

School Year 2021 - 2022 Current Language Service Use and Associated Costs

Translation	Month	# of Translation Requests to Vendor	Cost of Translation
Company: Language Bank	November	25	1,752.81
	December	19	1,907.17
	January	15	2,873.11
	February	12	2,522.71
	March (awaiting final invoice)	TBD	TBD
	Total (November to Present)	67	10,521.39
Interpretation	Month	# of Interpretation Requests to Vendor	Cost of Interpretation
Companies: Language Bank	November	41	4,495.00
	December	192	19,605.00
	January	215	25,605.00
	February	145	16,660.00
	March	117	11,265.00
	Total (November to Present)	766	82,970.00

Meeting Needs





Reflections on FY 21 and FY22

- In planning for FY 23, the Equity Office is considering service, usage and improvements to the translation, interpretation and other language access services. A few points for consideration:
 - Service needs have not been able to be fully met by the initially contracted vendor, so a second vendor contract was approved in December and just finalized the last week of March, resulting in lower invoicing against the contract as compared to FY21
 - Telephonic interpretation services were covered during the height of the COVID pandemic through a DESE grant which has now ended
 - The percentage of English Learners has increased by 4.7 percent number of students to date this school year
 - LPS anticipates receiving additional refugee students from Afghanistan and Ukraine as advised by the International Institute of New England
 - Further analysis needs to be conducted of staff who are bilingual and provide interpretation/translation services at their school site that are not explicitly included within their job description in order to understand the full need and balance of services across schools



Data Collection to Inform Service Improvement

- The following data is being collected and analyzed to inform Language Access improvements:
- Family/Community Survey
- Family Welcome Circle Feedback Forms (school-based)
- Phone interpretation Use (Staff feedback form)
- Hispanic Student Success Taskforce Advisement
- School Usage of Current Available Resources (comparative analysis)





Next Steps

- Develop a Language Access policy which codifies the District's commitment to language access services and resources and sets expectations for district offices and schools to ensure that limited English families have full and equal access to participating in their child's education.
- Complete the data analysis to determine whether services are equitably distributed across schools and central office departments to meet the different populations and languages served across the district.
- Finalize the communications plan and ensure limited English proficient families are made aware of their rights and available services as relates to removing language as a barrier to participating in their child's educational process.





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QUESTIONS?

